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Redevelopment Board Minutes 02/09/2004

Minutes of Arlington Redevelopment Board
February 9, 2004

Members Present: Ed Tsoi
 Roly Chaput
 Nora Mann
 Barry Faulkner
 Lynne Lowenstein

Also Present: Kevin J. O'Brien, Director, Planning & Community Dev.
 Laura Wiener, Planner
 Joey Glushko, Planner

In Addition: Craig Seymour, Alan McClennen, Jr., Ken Schwartz, Joe Tulimieri, and Jeff Mullan

The Board convened at 7:15 in the Selectmen's Chambers to report to the Selectmen on the status of the Symmes Arlington Conservation and Improvement Project.

After a short recess at 8:05 the Board reconvened in the Selectmen's Hearing Room. The meeting was intended to be located in the second floor conference room of the Town Hall Annex, but there were too many people for the room. The public was led to the Selectmen's Hearing Room and signs were posted at the conference room in case of later arrivals. The meeting was video recorded by RCN for play on the local cable station.

Ed Tsoi began directly on the deliberation of the proposals for the redevelopment of the Symmes Hospital site. He asked Kevin O'Brien to report on the staff analysis of the amount and quality of open space proposed by each applicant. Joe Tulimieri was asked about the disposition appraisal, and Mr. Tulimieri indicated that discussions he had with his consultant indicated that without being able to say with any certainty that the disposition appraisal would comport with the financial offerings; it was reasonable to proceed as long as any designation of a developer is made contingent upon completion of the appraisal. Joe Tulimieri and Alan McClennen, Jr. were asked to report on the reference checks they did.

Ed Tsoi brought up the concept of revenue neutrality and asked Alan McClennen, Jr. how in his memory the concept was treated during the process to-date. Mr. McClennen, Jr. reported it was always considered that it would take years and tax revenues to make the project revenue neutral and pointed to the language of the Selectmen's policy statement to reinforce the point. Joe Tulimieri added that it is almost unheard of in an urban renewal project that the sale of land would cover all the investment in the project.

Ed Tsoi then asked Craig Seymour to explain, in general terms, the methodology used to analyze the financial offerings and alluded to specifics of some offers that were not identified by name. Mr. Tsoi then asked Atty. Jeff Mullan to explain the criteria which allowed some of the analysis to be done only in Executive Session. Kevin O'Brien reassured those in attendance that the analysis would be made public when it no longer would affect the Town's negotiating position.

Ed Tsoi then asked each Board member to share his or her evaluation of the proposals in light of all the analysis and discussions. After lengthy discussion and explanation of the merits and shortcomings of each proposal in detail by each Board member, Ed Tsoi asked if the Board were ready to make a decision. Alan McClennen, Jr. was asked about the zoning changes that would need to be made, and Ed Tsoi mentioned that no matter which proposal was chosen, the proposal would be improved in the Environmental Design Review process. After some discussion, Nora Mann moved and Barry Faulkner seconded:

That the ARB tentatively designate Symmes Redevelopment Associates / E.A. Fish Co. as the redeveloper of the Symmes Arlington Conservation and Improvement Project, subject to the satisfaction of certain preconditions, including, but not limited to, the execution of a Land Disposition Agreement, completion of a disposition appraisal of the site, and confirmation that the appraisal supports the proposed disposition price, the approval of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development,

and such other terms and conditions as may be recommended by counsel or as the ARB may deem appropriate.

The motion carried 5 – 0.

The Board enjoyed a five minute recess before resuming business.

Kevin O'Brien reported that the developer of 264 Mass. Ave. indicated that the handicapped lift that was added to the plans at the 50% review made the f.a.r. exceed the allowed limit. He asked the Board to confirm that the change did not affect the favorable review because it was de minimus and also because a handicapped lift does not have to conform to zoning. The Board agreed.

The Board had a brief discussion regarding consultant contracts and adjourned at 10:30.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin J. O'Brien